

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3215

September 29, 2026

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Boozman, and Ranking Member Klobuchar:

As Members of the New York Congressional delegation, we write to urge you to secure a two-year delay of the new state SNAP benefit cost-share requirement, applied evenly to all affected states, as the Agricultural Act of 2026, the Senate's version of the 2026 Farm Bill, moves to the floor and toward any conference with the House-passed Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 (H.R. 7567). The Senate Agriculture Committee's decision to advance a one-year delay is a step in the right direction, but it falls short of giving states enough time to improve payment error rates and adequately fund the program at the local level. It also pairs this one-year delay with deeper SNAP cuts that would put food assistance for New York families at even greater risk in the future. This will drastically impact the families, seniors, and people with disabilities who depend on SNAP in New York and across the country.¹ Congress must provide immediate relief for low-income families and state and local governments without additional cuts that will make hunger worse in the future.

For six decades, the federal government covered the full cost of SNAP benefits. Under current law, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that states could collectively face an estimated \$9 billion in benefit costs in FY2028 alone, while the Congressional Budget Office estimates that state benefit cost-sharing will reduce federal spending by about \$41 billion over FY2028 through FY2034.² H.R. 1 requires affected states to shoulder this cost based on their SNAP payment error rates, on top of a separate cut to

¹Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, markup of the Agricultural Act of 2026, Sept. 16, 2026; National Association of Counties, Sept. 16, 2026.

²Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, June 2026; Congressional Budget Office, Supplemental Information, Aug. 11, 2025.

federal administrative funding that already takes effect this fall, regardless of the outcome of the Farm Bill.³

Requiring states to share in the cost of benefit based on payment errors is intended to give those states, in the words of the bill's authors, "skin in the game," leading to improved oversight and reduced improper payments.⁴ But a rushed implementation of this policy will not achieve that goal. It will undermine it. States and counties are already absorbing the increased cost of SNAP administration, and many face the difficult choice of cutting the administrative staff, technology, and casework capacity that actually reduces errors. This policy currently doubly disincentivizes accuracy. It starves the very systems meant to improve accuracy through the Administrative Cost Shift, and then punishes states that have reduced their error rates by limiting the longer delay to only those with the highest rates. This is not accountability. It punishes paperwork errors and human mistakes by burdening state taxpayers with new costs or taking food away from SNAP recipients.

This shift also comes at the worst possible moment, regardless of its merits. Families in New York and across the country are already struggling to keep up with the rising cost of groceries, housing, transportation, childcare, and health care, and simply to cover the ordinary cost of living. States could be forced to raise taxes, divert funding from other programs, or to restrict eligibility to reduce the number of people served, or ultimately withdraw from SNAP entirely if they do not have the means to absorb these new costs.⁵

This shift is also difficult to square with fiscal responsibility on its own terms. The federal government is projected to run a deficit of roughly \$2.1 trillion, and the national debt has now surpassed \$40 trillion.⁶ Shifting \$9 billion in first-year costs onto states, and by extension onto either taxpayers or the families who lose access to food assistance when states cannot absorb it, does not eliminate those costs. Moving the costs from one ledger to another, from Washington to state capitals, and ultimately to kitchen tables is not fiscal discipline.

The consequences of implementing this cost shift without giving states time to prepare are not merely administrative or budgetary. They will, in real terms, hurt state budgets, reduce services, and leave our constituents without food and other resources. Nationally, 83 percent of all SNAP benefits go to households that include a child, an older adult, or a person with a disability.⁷ The strain will not stop at SNAP itself: as enrollment falls, food banks and pantries absorb the resulting gap in need, and reductions in SNAP participation could affect free-meal access for at least 18.3 million students nationwide through individual certification or school- and state-level universal meal programs, according to the Urban

³H.R. 1 ("One Big Beautiful Bill Act"), P.L. 119-21, sections 10105-10106; New York State Association of Counties, accessed Sept. 16, 2026.

⁴Sen. John Boozman and Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson, joint statement on the FY2024 SNAP payment error rate, June 2025.

⁵Congressional Budget Office, Supplemental Information, Aug. 11, 2025 ("CBO expects that there will be a variety of state responses to the new requirement: some states will maintain current benefits and eligibility; others will modify benefits or eligibility or leave the program altogether.").

⁶Congressional Budget Office, "Monthly Budget Review: July 2026" (FY2026 deficit); U.S. Department of the Treasury / Joint Economic Committee, Sept. 2026 (national debt).

⁷U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "Characteristics of SNAP Households: Fiscal Year 2023," Dec. 1, 2025.

Institute.⁸ These are not abstract numbers to our constituents. They are the difference between a family affording groceries and a family going without, and for the children affected, research shows the consequences don't end when they turn eighteen.

Nearly 3 million New Yorkers, 14.8 percent of our state's population, rely on SNAP every month.⁹ New York's payment error rate of 13.18 percent puts the state on track for one of the largest benefit cost-shares in the country, estimated at up to \$1.2 billion annually, on top of a separate \$168 million in new annual administrative costs that begin for New York's counties and New York City this October.¹⁰ That is a burden most states cannot absorb without consequences felt throughout the state.

New York has not been standing still on this problem. The state's payment error rate has come down from 14.09 percent in fiscal year 2024 to 13.18 percent in fiscal year 2025, a real and meaningful improvement in administrative accuracy.¹¹ But under the Senate bill's current language, that improvement backfires. States with an error rate of 13.33 percent or higher in both fiscal year 2025 and 2026 qualify for an automatic delay of the benefit cost-share until fiscal year 2030. New York's fiscal year 2025 improvement moved it just below that threshold, disqualifying the state from the additional year of delay that states with worse error rates than New York's remain eligible to receive.

Massachusetts and Maryland, which also brought their error rates down over the same period, face the identical problem. New Jersey's story is even starker: it reduced its error rate from 14.33 percent in fiscal year 2024 to 6.86 percent in fiscal year 2025, the largest improvement of any state in the country, and that improvement is what made it ineligible for the automatic delay based on its fiscal year 2025 rate.¹² Meanwhile, Alaska and Georgia, two states among the highest error rates in the nation, remain eligible to qualify for the automatic delay because their fiscal year 2025 rates remained above the threshold. A policy that rewards Alaska and Georgia for a high error rate while penalizing New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, and New Jersey for bringing theirs down is not an accountability measure. It will hit blue states and red states, and the families in both, exactly the same way.

These are not hypothetical choices. Illinois and Georgia now require most households to recertify their eligibility twice as often, a change that can cause eligible families to lose benefits through paperwork alone.¹³ CBO itself estimates that, in an average month over fiscal years 2028 through 2034, states' responses to this cost-share will reduce or eliminate SNAP benefits for roughly 300,000 people nationally

⁸Urban Institute, "Changes to SNAP Could Reduce Student Access to Free School Meals," 2025; Food Research & Action Center, May 2026 (74 percent of surveyed school districts are concerned about the effect of SNAP and Medicaid cuts on school meal programs).

⁹USAFacts, updated June 5, 2026; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, FY2025 data.

¹⁰Hunger Solutions New York, June 2026; Newsweek, Sept. 2026; New York State Association of Counties, accessed Sept. 16, 2026.

¹¹Hunger Solutions New York, June 2026 (New York's error rate fell from 14.09 percent in FY2024 to 13.18 percent in FY2025, moving the state below the delay-qualifying threshold).

¹²Newsweek, Sept. 2026 (New Jersey reduced its error rate from 14.33 percent in FY2024 to 6.86 percent in FY2025, the largest improvement nationally, leaving it ineligible for the automatic delay based on its FY2025 rate).

¹³Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "Post-Megabill Drop in SNAP Participation Is Steepest in Decades," Apr. 29, 2026.

and reduce child-nutrition subsidies for another 96,000 children.¹⁴ Sustained over that seven-year period, that is a recurring toll that will touch the lives of millions of Americans.

In June 2025, 23 governors wrote to Congress warning that some states may have no choice but to withdraw from the program entirely, calling the expectation that states can simply backfill these costs “unrealistic.” The National Association of Counties, which represents counties across the political spectrum, has separately and consistently urged Congress to adopt a clean, straightforward delay of the cost-share requirement.¹⁵ The National Governors Association and other state and local officials have made similar asks.¹⁶ A state does not need to be at the top of this list to be pushed into that choice. This is precisely the scenario Congress still has time to prevent.

A two-year delay of the SNAP benefit cost-share, applied evenly so that every affected state has the same runway to improve its payment accuracy and budget for the transition, is a pragmatic and realistic remedy, not an open-ended request. It does not ask Congress to abandon the goal of improving SNAP's payment accuracy. It asks only for a fair, workable runway to get there, one that treats every state the same. It gives states the time they need to improve their error rates and adjust their budgets to withstand a new, unplanned cost, and it protects our constituents from the ripple effects that budget hit would produce. This is also not a new idea: Ranking Member Klobuchar has raised the same concern since committee markup began, that a one-year delay leaves states with mid-level error rates worse off than the states with the very highest error rates, which can receive a longer reprieve under current law.¹⁷ Fixing that imbalance should be the floor for any final agreement, not a concession still to be negotiated down.

No delay should be paired with deeper SNAP cuts in the future. Senate Republicans’ farm bill proposal would permanently increase the cost shift for some states from fifteen percent to twenty percent of benefit costs starting in Fiscal Year 2031. Just as H.R. 1 gave states little time to avoid the underlying cost shift, the first year of these higher penalties would be based on states’ effort rates in Fiscal Year 2028—which starts October 1, 2027, just one year away. New York’s expected costs would spike from \$1.15 billion annually to more than \$1.5 billion, further increasing the risk to food assistance for low-income New Yorkers and other vital state-funded programs and services.

We ask that the Senate ensure this two-year delay without deeper cuts to SNAP is included before the Agricultural Act of 2026 leaves this chamber, whether in the substitute amendment adopted on the floor or in the underlying bill itself. For our part, we are committed to working with our House colleagues to secure this same protection when the bill returns to the House, whether through the conference process or through separate legislative action, so that no version of the final 2026 Farm Bill reaches the President's desk without it.

¹⁴Ibid. (Congressional Budget Office, Supplemental Information, Aug. 11, 2025), estimating that, in an average month over FY2028-FY2034, states’ responses will reduce or eliminate SNAP for about 300,000 people and reduce child-nutrition subsidies for about 96,000 children.

¹⁵Letter from 23 governors to congressional leadership, June 2025, as reported by Newsweek; National Association of Counties, statements urging a clean SNAP cost-share delay, 2026.

¹⁶<https://www.nga.org/advocacy-communications/letters-nga/nga-joins-coalition-letter-outlining-snap-recommendations/>

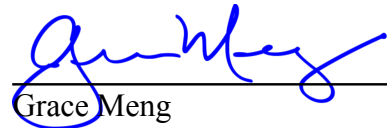
¹⁷Sen. Amy Klobuchar, statement on Farm Bill markup, Aug. 6, 2026, reiterated Sept. 16, 2026.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to working with you to ensure the final 2026 Farm Bill does not deepen food insecurity in New York or in any state, and we look forward to your prompt reply.

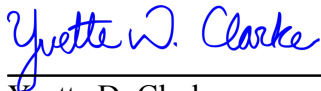
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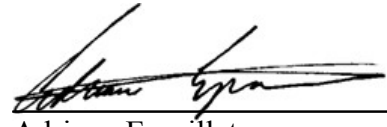
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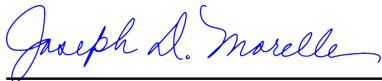
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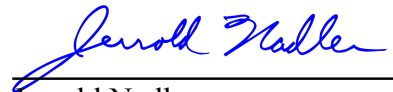
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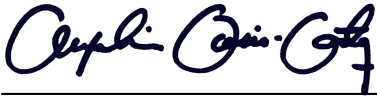
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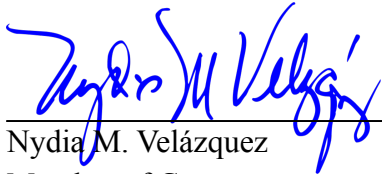
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